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THE CURSE.

BY MISS ELIZA A. DUFFY.

[Continued.]

It was towards the close of the second year of
their marriage that Melton entered his small and
wretched apartment, and informed Genevieve that
he was ordered on an expedition which would detain
him until the following day.

The civil authorities, said he, "have been in-
formed that the noted pirate, Manning, is concealed
in the suburbs of the city, with a few of his most
desperate followers. You know that he has once
been taken, and escaped, and the police have ever
since been on the alert for him. It is generally
supposed that he will make a desperate defence,
and a guard of the military has been ordered out to
protect the officers of justice. The command is in-
trusted to me, and I watched a moment to tell you
not to expect me home before morning."

"Genevieve listened in terror, and said,
"I have felt a presentiment of evil darkening my
mind during the day. This foolish, I know, to in-
dulge such feelings, but I cannot shake them off—
Be careful, for Heaven's sake."

"For your sake, I certainly will," replied Melton,
smiling. "If your cheek blanches at the prospect
of a slight skirmish, how could you bear to see me
go forth to battle? Still the alarms of that too
sensitive heart, and be assured I shall return in
safety."

A smile, bright as those of former days, beamed
on his face, as he bade her farewell, and she stood
at the window watching his graceful figure until it
receded from her view; then, wiping the tears from
her eyes, she murmured,

"If any harm were to befall him, I should be lost,
indeed. Yet I fear my fond idolatry deserves some
punishment."

Her presentiments were too fatally verified—
The pirates contended fiercely, and Melton was
brought home severely wounded. Genevieve hung
over him in speechless agony, and refused to listen
to the consolations the surgeon endeavored to
give her. For some weeks his life was held by a
feeble thread, but the unremitting attentions of his
devoted wife, and the prescriptions of a judicious
medical attendant, finally restored him to some-
thing like health, though his constitution had re-
ceived a shock, from which he felt it would never
recover.

During his illness, his wife visited him, and so-
othed by the extreme distress of Genevieve, he be-
gan by pitying his unfortunate circumstances, and
ended in offering them an asylum in his own house.
Melton rejoiced in the illness that opened to him a
prospect of future fortune, and gave him the power
of placing his admirable wife in the sphere she was
so eminently fitted to adorn.

The heart of Genevieve was beginning to recover
something of its former lightness; and the smile
that irradiated her lovely features the delighted
Melton saw was the offering of genuine happiness,
which a letter was conveyed to her, informing her
that if she wished to obtain information respecting
her father, the writer had it in his power to gratify
her. He directed where an answer might be de-
sired, that would reach him, and Genevieve replied
that it was the wish of her father that she should be
informed of his situation, nothing could afford her
more gratification.

The answer was brief. The writer directed her
to go to the prison in which the pirates were con-
fined: to inquire for Manning, and desire an interview
with him. She was commanded not to in-
form her husband of her intentions, as his knowl-
edge of them would compromise the safety of her
father. He adjured her, by the love her father had
borne for her, not to fail in following his directions.

"How do," the letter concluded, "you will repeat
it to the last moment of your existence, and the
recollection of it will darken every hour of your
future life."

After that she could not hesitate: and, with an in-
definite feeling of dread she prepared to obey the in-
junctions contained in the letter. During Melton's
illness and convalescence, the pirates had been
taken and condemned to death, and were now
waiting their fate in the city jail.

Disguising herself as well as she was able, she
made some excuse for absenting herself from home
for several hours, and proceeded to the prison—
Her correspondent had informed her that, on show-
ing the superscription of his last letter, the jailer
would readily admit her. She followed his direc-
tions implicitly: and, with much less difficulty than
she had anticipated, found herself in the cell of the
condemned convict. A mist seemed to fall over
her sight, as the ponderous door closed after her,
and she trembled so violently that she was com-
pelled to lean against the wall for support.

As she recovered her self-possession, she looked
around the miserable place in which she stood—
In one corner, on a heap of straw, sat a man with
his wrists and ankles heavily ironed. His form
was wasted almost to a skeleton. His features were
thin and sallow, and his matted black hair hung
in masses over his brow; but amid all the awfulness
that surrounded him, it was evident that the per-
son before her had known better days, and that he
had once been eminently handsome. There were
marks of deep suffering, such as "the soul's war
doth leave behind," in his countenance; but if she
had not known it, she would never have said that
she was in the presence of a man whose bloody
deeds had so often filled her heart with horror—
There was none of that savagery and ferocity she
had expected to see stamped on the face before her.

On the contrary, his dark eyes seemed to rest on
her with an expression of pity and tenderness—
He appeared to be laboring under strong agitation,
and rising with difficulty, he addressed her in a
deep, sad tone, that thrilled to her heart:

"So you have come, and the fate of a father is
not indifferent to you, although you are surrounded
by all that makes life desirable to the young."

"Yes, I am here to learn the history of a parent,
who has never ceased to be dear to my heart. In
mercy tell me what danger hangs over him and if
it is in my power to avert it."

"It is, lady; but can you bear to know who and
what our father is? Are you prepared to find him
fallen; degraded; unworthy to look on you, much
less to call you his child?"

"He is still my father," murmured Genevieve—
"I can bear any thing better than this horrible
suspense. I am ready to do any thing—everything
for him that lies in my power. Speak! in mercy
to me all you know."

The man slipped one of his hands from the iron
ring that confined it, and threw back the hair from
his forehead. At the same moment he advanced,
so that the light from the solitary window fell full
on his features. Genevieve uttered one wild, hor-
rifying shriek, and sunk nearly insensible on his
bosom. In that calm, heavenly face, though altered
by time, and wasted by intense suffering, she

recognized her father! Years had intervened since
she had last seen him, but she could not be mis-
taken in the features so indelibly engraved on her
memory. When she recovered consciousness, she
started from his supporting arm, and exclaimed—
"Miserable! miserable! to find you at last, and thus!"
and she covered her face with her hands, and wept
bitterly.

"Genevieve," said her father, "you do indeed
find me wretchedly situated. Had not necessity
compelled me to unfold it, you should never have
known that you are the pirate's daughter."

"Can it be true?" said Genevieve. "The pirate's
daughter! Yes—yes—it is so. Am I the child
of that cruel man, of whose deeds of daring I have
read, while my blood coagulated with horror?"

"Father! father! Oh, what could so harden your
once feeling heart?"

"Desperation," replied he. "I found myself an
outcast, with a curse resting on my head. I was
deprived of the fortune legally mine, by the unjust
will of a cruel father. I felt a savage joy in break-
ing every link that bound me to my species, and I
took a dreadful revenge for their cruelty to me—
I have seen the proud man kneel for mercy, and
heard the coward shriek in his agony; and I laugh-
ed, as I heard the death rattle in their throats, and
thought that I was avenged; but I did not wish you
to be like myself. Your pure heart, I was resolv-
ed, should never be contaminated by the guilt of
mine. I knew it was death to be loved or cher-
ished by such a wretch as I am, for had not a bright
fallen on the only creature who ever truly loved
me? I tore myself from you, and tried to cease
to care for you. But I was not all lost: there were
some lingerings of humanity still in my heart, and
you, alone, of all the world, were the only creature
I did not hate. I have never lost sight of you. In
your poverty I would have lavished on you my il-
l-gotten wealth, had it not all been wrested from me
by the mutiny of my ungrateful followers. They
set myself and my three faithful companions on
fire, with nothing but the clothes we wore. We
have since rendered ourselves more notorious than
ever, though no money was gained in our late
achievements. I intended you to go down to the
grave, without knowing the history of your unfor-
tunate parent: but the love of life is strong, and
I knew it was only through your filial affection, that
I could obtain the means of escape. All I require
of you is to visit me this evening, and bring a file
of your hair, and if you can provide a place of con-
cealment for me, for a few days, until the first heat
of pursuit is over, my escape is certain."

Genevieve listened in bewildered silence. She
was too much overwhelmed by the recent dis-
covery, to have the power of thought. That father,
over whose image she had wept, in agonized
sorrow, and whose sufferings had inflicted the first
severe pang on her heart, was now before her, a
condemned felon! and she shrank, with a feeling
of dread and horror, from the conviction that her
worst apprehensions were more than realized—
Her father did not understand the cause of her
silence:

"Do you shrink from assisting me?" he inquired,
in a stern tone. Then, softening, he said, "If so,
I can but die."

"Die!" almost shrieked the distracted Gene-
vieve. "Die?" when I can save you! No, no;
if you do not wish to drive me quite mad, do not
use such reproachful language. I would—indeed
I would—give my life to wipe this stain from your
name, or to rescue you from your impending fate."

The unfortunate man again approached her, and
drawing her towards him, threw his arm around
her form, and said—in a tone softened by emo-
tion—

"And, fallen as he is, you do love your father?
Genevieve, my child—my beautiful—my innocent
—this brief moment repays me for years of suffer-
ing. How I have loved you, the heart that has but
suffered from which to bestow its tenderness, and
which is as adamant to the rest of the world, can
alone feel. You have been the passion of my life.
Amid all your future years, think of me as one
whose best feelings were turned into a fountain of
bitterness, by the injustice of the world, and who
recklessly sought to avenge on his whole species
the injuries inflicted by a few individuals."

Genevieve's sobs rendered it almost impossible
to distinguish her reply. So great was the agony
of that moment, she felt the impossibility of her
wring heart ever again experiencing so severe a
pang. She remembered the necessity of making
some arrangement for her father's escape, and, af-
ter a struggle, she overcame her violent emotion
sufficiently to speak calmly on the measures to be
pursued.

There was a pavilion in the garden of Mr Crawford
surrounded by a quantity of thick shrubbery. For-
tunately the old gentleman was absent, and the key
was in the possession of Genevieve. This was the
most secure asylum she could think of for her father,
and, rapidly describing its situation, she promised
to call in the evening with the file, and the next
morning, at early dawn, to meet him in the garden,
and admit him into his place of concealment.

"Remember, Genevieve," said the father, "that
your husband must know nothing of this until I am
safe from pursuit."

"No; it shall be confided to my own breast until
but will not the tourist suspect?"

"No," replied Manning; "he has no suspicion
of the relation in which we stand to each other—
That shall never be known through my agency—
He is a friend of my better days, and once in boy-
hood, I conferred an obligation on him, which has
never been forgotten. He would himself have pro-
cured the means of my escape, had he dared do so.
Now leave me, Genevieve, and do not fail in your
exercises, for on you, alone, I depend."

We pass over the wild anguish of Genevieve—
That night she did not attempt to sleep. She
walked the floor of her room during its long hours:
and to all Melton's attempts to draw from her the
cause of her wretchedness, she replied with such a
burst of ungovernable feeling, that he at length
desisted, in the belief that her mind was affected by
illness. Her quick pulse, and burning hand, con-
vinced him that his conjectures were right. When
he insisted on sending for medical advice, she op-
posed it with such vehemence that he acquiesced,
determined, if she was not much better in the
morning, to attend no longer to her remonstrances.

Sleeping in such a state, he could not think of
sleeping, and all her entreaties were vain to induce
him to endeavor to obtain some rest. As morning
approached, she became calmer, and taking the
hand of her husband, she said, with touching so-
lemnity, while tears streamed over her pallid face—
"Charles, have I ever deceived you?"

"No, dearest, never!"

"Then grant the request I am about to make,
without seeking to know its motives. It is dictated
by a breaking heart, and must be complied with.
Suffer me to leave you for one hour. I intended
to have gone without your knowledge but you have

watched me so closely that I find it impossible—
You think me delirious; I am not; I am as per-
fectly sane as ever I was in my life. But, if you
refuse my request, it will drive me to madness—
In two days, I will explain all. You must promise
not to follow me, and to make no effort to discover
whether I am going."

Melton was convinced, by her manner, that she
was as she asserted, perfectly conscious of what she
was saying; and though perplexed and distressed,
he thought her request might have some reference
to her father, and he reluctantly consented to com-
ply with it. She arose, and thanking him, prepar-
ed to go out.

Melton felt a thrill, almost of horror, run through
his heart, as the door closed on her retiring form,
and something like a conviction that she was hasten-
ing into some unknown danger, came to his
mind. So strong was this impression, that he fol-
lowed her, with the intention of recalling her per-
mission, but her movements were too rapid for him.

She was already out of sight; and he returned
with a heavy heart, to count the tedious moments,
until the limited time of absence had expired. He
looked at his watch more than once; and at length,
becoming impatient of her delay, he threw up a
window, hoping to see her returning.

The window looked out on the garden, and the
faint light of early dawn was beginning to disperse
the gloom that enveloped every object. Suddenly,
he heard a voice directly under the window, say,

"We have him now, safe enough. The old fel-
low did not think we would so soon track him to
his hiding place. I saw him go in at ere house,
or my name is not Jack Dobbin."

He looked down, and saw four men, well armed,
stealing cautiously towards the pavilion. In another
moment, the door of the building was thrown open,
and he heard a scuffle, and a scream. That
wild shriek appeared to freeze every drop of blood
in his veins, for he recognized the voice of his
wife! He stood, for an instant, incapable of mov-
ing; but the report of a pistol roused him, and,
daring from the room, he ran wildly towards the
scene of strife. A man passed him, as he rushed
into the pavilion, and he heard him jump over the
fence.

What a scene was there presented to the idoling
husband! His wife was supported in the arms
of one of the officers of justice; her hair hanging
loose over her neck and bosom, and dabbled with
the blood that was streaming from her side, and her
dress torn many of the same dreadful stains.

"Has he escaped?" she gasped, as Melton rushed
towards her.

"Who? who?" he frantically exclaimed, as he
raised her in his arms, but she was past answering.
She was borne to the house, and surgical assistance
immediately procured. She lived some hours, and
revived sufficiently to explain the late events to her
husband.

The officers gave the remaining explanation—
The escape of Manning had been very soon dis-
covered, and they traced him to the place of meeting
with Genevieve. On the first alarm, he had thrown
open a window